

The HEPZIBAH HEN BOOK



OLWEN BOWEN

THE HEPZIBAH HEN BOOK

By Olwen Bowen

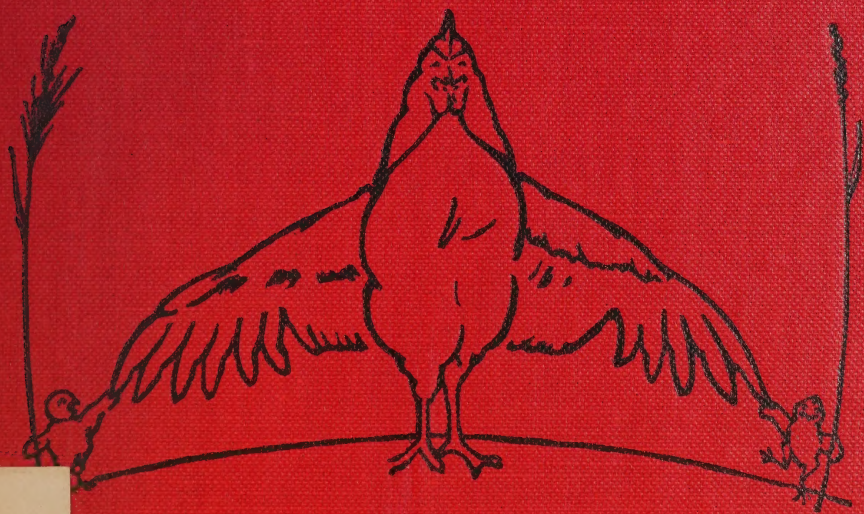
THE extraordinary popularity of 'Hepzibah Hen' over the radio indicates a warm reception for her and her farmyard associates in this, their first appearance in print.

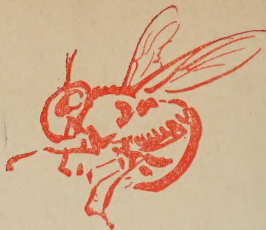
Hepzibah Hen, always the lady, was the acknowledged leader of farmyard society. Her friends and companions, Gertie Grunter, Kathleen Cow, Dorcas Donkey, the giddy Chirabelle Chicken, who bobbed her feathers, Cuthbert Cockerel, who is too proud to gossip — all are astonishingly human, and their adventures will delight every child of five or ten.

Every now and then a book is written for children that is really universal in its appeal. Such a book is the story of Hepzibah Hen.

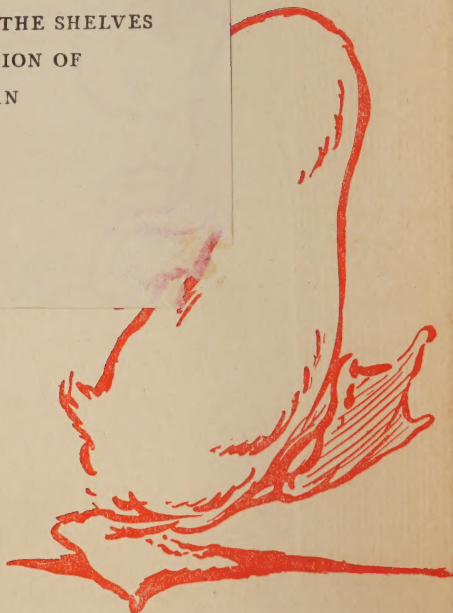
Illustrated in color

The
HEPZIBAH HEN
BOOK






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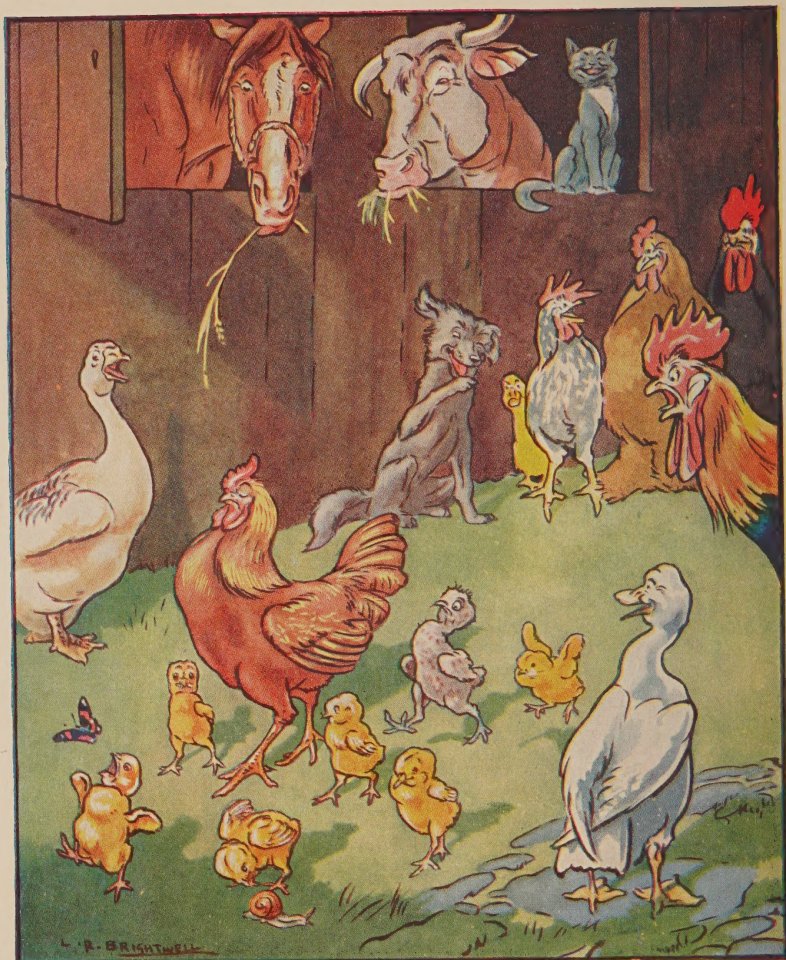




The Hepzibah Hen Book



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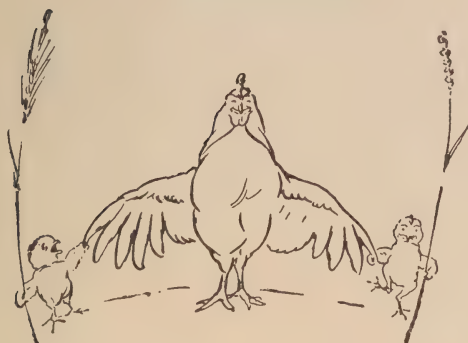
People did stare at them as they went through the Yard!

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The Hepzibah Hen Book

BY
OLWEN BOWEN

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS



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To
MY CAT
who has played a larger part
in these stories than meets the eye



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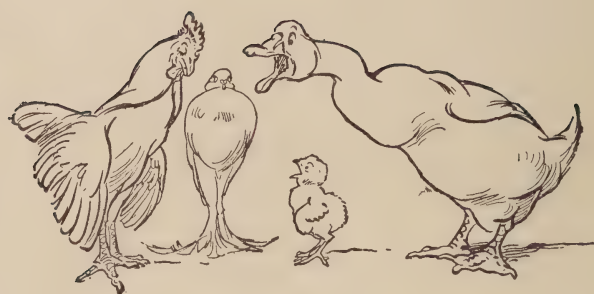
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The Hepzibah Hen Book

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CHAPTER I

In Which Hepzibah Loses Some Feathers

HEPZIBAH HEN was moulting. She used to be so proud of her beautiful feathers, and now they were dropping out, one by one, all over the Farmyard, which was untidy as well as inconvenient.



“What shall I do?” she asked of Cuthbert

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Cockerel, whom she happened to meet outside the barn.

“Do?” repeated Cuthbert, who had got up late that morning and was feeling rather cross. “Do? Cockadoodle do? I don’t know what you can do. I expect they will just keep on dropping out until you grow bald, and then you’ll be eaten for dinner—that’s what you’ll do!” And he hurried on, muttering, “Do! Do! Cockadoodle dooo!” to himself as he went.

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Then Hepzibah Hen *was* unhappy. It was bad enough to think of all her lovely feathers dropping out, but the possibility of being eaten for dinner was even worse. She hurried on through the Farmyard until she met Kathleen Cow.

“Good-morning, Kathleen Cow,” she said politely. “What a beautiful coat you’ve got.”

Kathleen Cow looked down at her with large mournful eyes, and nodded her head.

“Please will you tell me how to make my feathers grow beautiful and thick like your coat?” asked Hepzibah, and told her all about her feathers, and what Cuthbert Cockerel had said about being eaten for dinner.

“Well, I don’t know,” answered Kathleen. “I just stand about in the fields under trees most of the day, and I expect that’s good for my coat. Why don’t you choose a nice wet field, and stand still under a tree for a day or two? I don’t see how you can expect your feathers to grow when

you are always rushing about the way you do."

"Thank you," said Hepzibah. "I'll go and start at once — Good-bye."

"Good-mooooooooorning," said Kathleen Cow sleepily, as she flicked at a fly with her long tail.

It didn't take Hepzibah long to find a nice green field with a tree in the middle of it. She couldn't help feeling rather foolish as she stood there all by herself—one small hen alone in the middle of a large field. What a tiresome business it was, too, this standing still! She wasn't used to it, and it made her legs ache. Soon she began to feel very cold.

"Atishoo! Atishoo!" said Hepzibah Hen.

"What's that?" grunted Gertrude Grunter, the Prize Pig, who had wandered in through a hole in the hedge. "What are you doing? You do look funny!" And Gertrude began to laugh in a funny, grunting way.

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“Don’t laugh at me!” cried Hepzibah almost in tears, and explained just what she was doing.

“Well, I think it’s a silly idea,” said Gertrude.

“And it doesn’t seem to be much good either. Look!” And she pointed to a little circle of feathers that had fallen off, one by one, as Hepzibah had been standing under the tree.

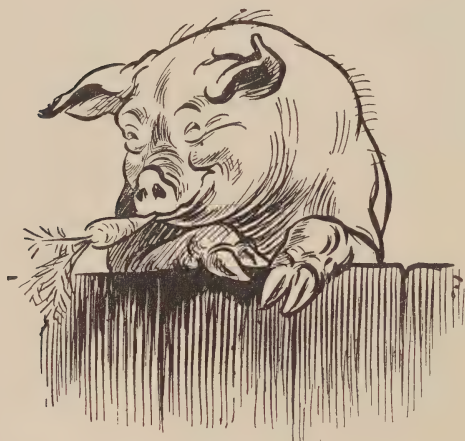
“Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What shall I do?” said Hepzibah. “All my feathers will drop out and I shall be eaten for dinner!” And she really did begin to cry this time.

“Dear, dear!” grunted Gertrude. “Never mind, stop crying—I expect we’ll be able to think of



something. I know—splendid idea—why don't you try mud baths? I've always found mud very good for the hair, and I should think it would be good for feathers too."

So off they went together till they came to a deep, muddy ditch, then Gertrude Grunter climbed



slowly down until she reached the mud. Then she sat down in the mud—lay in the mud—rolled in the mud—wallowed in the mud; and all round her the mud went squish, squish, squishy, squelch.

"I don't think I should like that," said Hepzibah. "But perhaps I had better try. Anyway, it would be better than going bald and being eaten for dinner."

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So down *she* climbed, too, and started wading into the mud. Before she knew where she was she had sunk right in, and the sticky brown mud was climbing higher and higher up her neck.

“Help!” she cried. “Help! Help! I’m going down and down!”

But Gertrude was not far away, and in a very

few moments she had lifted Hepzibah out onto the firm ground.

"There! Wasn't that lovely?" said Gertrude, puffing out her cheeks with pleasure.

"I don't think it was lovely at all!" sobbed Hepzibah, who had really been very frightened indeed. "And now I'm all covered with horrid brown mud—and *look* at all my feathers that have come out!"

And sure enough, the ditch was full of dragged feathers poking up here and there through the mud.

"What is the matter?" asked Dulcima Duck, who had come waddling up to see what all the noise was about, and she listened carefully to Hepzibah's long tale of woe.

"Well, swimming in the pond has always been very good for *my* feathers," she said at last, "and, anyway, it would wash some of that mud off, so I should think you had better come and try."

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So away they went to the pond, and before long Hepzibah was paddling in the cold water.

"Go in," said the Duck. "Go right in; it's quite easy." And she gave her a little push from behind with her beak.



"Oh, dear!" cried Hepzibah, as she swallowed a mouthful of dirty water. "This is colder than standing in a field, and more dangerous than rolling in a muddy ditch, and oh, dear, oh, dear—Help! Help! I'm drowning!"

"Silly," quacked the Duck. "That isn't the way to swim at all. It is quite easy. All you have to do is . . ."

But Hepzibah waited for no more. She scrambled out of the pond and ran across the yard just as fast as her legs would carry her, leaving several feathers floating on the pond.

As she drew near the garden gate, who should come out but the Farmer and his son. They were busy talking, and as she passed she heard the terrible word "DINNER."

"There's one," said the Farmer's son, pointing at Hepzibah. "Shall I catch her?"

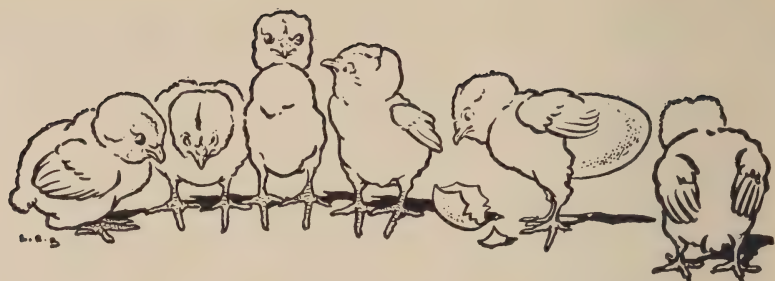
"Oh, no," answered the Farmer. "I don't think much of that one. Look at her feathers — and she's all wet and muddy. Now *there's* a fine young cockerel — I think he'll do nicely."

Hepzibah heard it all quite distinctly, and so did Cuthbert — and now it was his turn to run. And he did run. He ran so fast and so well, in and out among the hay ricks, that neither the Farmer's son nor the Farmer himself was able to catch him, so they decided to have potatoes for dinner

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instead, and went back into the garden to dig them.

And whether it was standing in the field, or rolling in the mud, or swimming in the pond that made Hepzibah's feathers grow will never be known. But certain it is that from that day they stopped coming out, and now she has as thick and shiny a coat as any hen could wish for.



CHAPTER II

In Which Gertie Grunter Calls Late for Her Easter Egg

HEPZIBAH HEN was very busy—very busy indeed. It was the day before Easter, and she had promised Easter eggs to such a lot of people. They had been coming for them in one long stream all the afternoon, and now there were only two eggs left.

“Never mind!” said Hepzibah cheerfully as she handed out a nice brown speckly one to Taraxacum Turkey. “Easter comes but once a year and when it comes it brings good cheer.”

“That’s wrong,” snapped Taraxacum. “That’s

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Christmas—and anyway it doesn't." Which was rather an odd remark, but nobody took any notice. Everybody knows that it isn't very kind to talk about Christmas to a Turkey, and Hepzibah would never have done it on purpose.



"Only one left now!" cried Hepzibah, "and they *did* take me such a long time to collect. I had quite a nest full this morning."

"Whose is it?" asked Cuthbert Cockerel.

"It's the one I promised to Gertie Grunter, the Prize Pig," answered Hepzibah. "I hope she won't forget to come for it."

But Cuthbert Cockerel had already wandered away looking for grains of corn, and there was

no one left to answer her. She didn't seem to mind, though, and went on clucking away to herself.

"I'm sure Gertie Grunter won't forget," she said. "She asked for her egg so very specially and particularly—and she never forgets anything like that. . . . A lovely egg it is too—so large and white—the biggest I've had at all. . . . Oh!—"

She stopped suddenly, for a terrible thing had happened—the lovely white egg had quite suddenly cracked in halves round the middle, and out stepped a tiny ball of yellow fluff.

"Cheep! Cheep!! Cheep!!!" said the ball of yellow fluff.

"Oh . . . Er . . . I beg your pardon," said Hepzibah Hen.

"Cheep! Cheep! Cheep! Cheep!" said the ball of fluff again, in a louder voice this time.

"What's your name?" asked Hepzibah Hen, as she couldn't think of anything else to say.

The ball of yellow fluff put its head on one

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side and considered for a moment or two, then it spoke in a funny, squeaky little voice:

"Chirabel Chicken," it said.

"Oh!" said Hepzibah, who had got over her surprise by now. "Yes," she went on. "That's all very well, but what about my egg?"

Chirabel Chicken turned round and looked at the broken eggshells on the ground.

"I don't know," she chirped. "I hadn't thought of that."

Hepzibah Hen didn't know either. It *was* a problem. She told Chirabel all about Gertie Grunter, and then she called Cuthbert Cockerel back and told him all about Chirabel Chicken.



"Cockadoodle doo! What are you going to dooo?" said Cuthbert. He was really rather a tiresome sort of person, for he always *did* say

that. And he kept on and on saying it too, till all of a sudden he stopped short in the middle and said, "I've an idea."

"Cheep! Cheep!" said Chirabel Chicken, but neither of them took any notice of her and Cuthbert went on with his idea.

"Do you remember?" he said. "Some time ago Farmer brought out a hard white shiny egg and put it in your nest? You were very angry with it at the time and kicked it out, but I think I know where it rolled to." And off he went to look for it. He was back the next moment carrying with him the largest and whitest and shiniest egg that had ever been seen.

"Cheep! Cheep!" said Chirabel again.

Hepzibah put her head on one side and looked at it doubtfully.

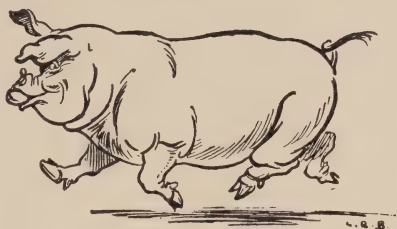
"I don't know," she said, "that that is a really, truly, proper egg."

"Of course it is!" answered Cuthbert. "And

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anyway you'll have to do it, for here comes Gertie Grunter."

So there was nothing for it, and Hepzibah had to wish Gertie a very happy Easter and give her the egg that Cuthbert had found.



And Gertie Grunter *was* pleased. She grunted and snuffled with pleasure; said "Thank you" most politely; and went away proudly carrying with her the largest, the whitest, and the shiniest egg that had ever been seen.

Then Hepzibah looked at Cuthbert, and Cuthbert looked at Hepzibah, and Chirabel looked at each of them in turn. Hepzibah was the first to speak.

"It's all very well," she said, "but what will happen to-morrow morning when Gertie wants to eat her Easter egg?"

No one could answer that, and Hepzibah went to bed feeling rather a guilty and deceitful sort of hen, and wondering just what *would* happen when Gertie Grunter found out.

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All the Farmyard Folk got up very early next morning and went round wishing each other best Easter wishes, and arranging Easter egg parties in different corners of the Farmyard.

"I couldn't *think* of enjoying my Easter egg all by myself, without asking any one else to come and share it," said Kathleen Cow, and they all agreed with her that that would be a horrid thing to do.

"I don't think so at all," said Gertie Grunter, who came out of Sty House at that moment. "I'm going to have my whole egg all to myself, and none of you shall have any of it."

No one said anything, as Gertie was known to be by far the greediest person in the Yard, but



the others couldn't help feeling just a little bit annoyed when Gertie went on to say:

"And it's no good any of you being jealous, for mine is the largest, the whitest, and the shiniest egg that has ever been seen, and I'm going to eat it all myself." And she waddled back into Sty House.

Then Hepzibah Hen began to laugh, and Cuthbert Cockerel began to laugh, and Chirabel Chicken began to laugh, and the cackling, clucking, laughing sound echoed all over the Farmyard. And none of the other animals knew what they were laughing at—and what's more they

never found out. Neither were they ever able to discover why Gertie Grunter always looked the other way when she saw Hepzibah Hen coming along, nor why Chirabel Chicken always said, "Cheep! Cheep! Cheep!!" in such an extra specially squeaky voice whenever she met Gertie Grunter.





CHAPTER III

In Which Hepzibah Gives a Party

THERE were two of them — Dorcas Donkey and Alphonso Ass. They came home with the Farmer from market one Friday evening, and they really were rather odd-looking people. It was the day before Hepzibah's Party, which made things rather awkward, for it seemed unkind to leave them out, but, as Hepzibah said, "Surely one can't ask complete strangers to one's party."

She asked Cuthbert Cockerel what he thought about it, and all he would say was:

“Do as you please—you generally do.” And then he went on strutting about the Rickyard just as if there was no difficult question to be settled at all.

So Hepzibah had to think it out all by herself, and in the end she decided to go and call on the two newcomers the first thing on Saturday morning.

She found them in the Paddock, and they all said good-morning to each other quite politely. Then Hepzibah asked if perhaps they would like to come to her party that afternoon.

“Yes, please!” said Dorcas, and

“Yes, thank you!” said Alphonso; and then they turned away and started talking to each other, and took no more notice of Hepzibah.

“Er—er—er—is there anything special that you like to eat?” asked Hepzibah doubtfully.

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They really were such odd-looking people that it seemed quite likely that they would not care for corn, or meal, or any of the other things that Hepzibah had got for her party.

“Carrots,” said Dorcas.

“Thistles,” said Alphonso; and they went on talking again and took no notice at all of Hepzibah.

“Oh, dear! Oh, dear!” said Hepzibah to herself as she hurried away. “Carrots and thistles! Thistles and carrots! And I haven’t got any of either.”

“Chirabel Chicken, Chirabel Chicken,” she called as she hurried back to the Cart Lodge. “Such a difficult thing—they are coming to the party and they must have thistles and carrots to eat!”

“I know where we can get some carrots,” said Chirabel Chicken. “There are lots in the corner of the garden down by the brook, and they scratch up quite easily.”

So they hurried to the corner of the garden down by the brook, and they scratched and they scratched and they scratched and they scratched until soon they had a pile of carrots which, as Hepzibah remarked, was "quite as much as was good for any Donkey."

"It was thistles Alphonso asked for, though," she added in a worried sort of way.

"Surely there must be thistles somewhere," said Chirabel Chicken, and they both thought hard. But it was no good, and Hepzibah hurried



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out to see if anybody else could tell her where thistles grew.

The first person she asked was Kathleen Cow.

"Such a funny thing to want," she added, feeling really very worried indeed. "I never heard of any one else wanting to eat thistles!"

"Most unusual!" agreed Kathleen Cow. "Most extraordinary taste!"

But Kathleen Cow was no help, nor was Taraxacum Turkey, nor Gertie Grunter, and Hepzibah was beginning to think that Alphonso would have to go without his thistles after all, when suddenly Chirabel Chicken came running across the Yard in a tremendous state of excitement.

"I've found them!" she cried. "Down at the bottom of the Old Meadow there's a ditch full of tall prickly thistles, and I've brought this basket which we can carry between us to put them in."

Hepzibah *was* relieved. But picking the this-

tles was no easy matter, and both she and Chirabel found it a very prickly kind of business. At last they filled the basket and hurried back to the Cart Lodge with it. They put it in a corner near the entrance where Alphonso was bound to see it on his way in, and next door to it they put the pile of carrots.

Then Hepzibah and Chirabel hurriedly fluffed out their feathers, polished their beaks, and made themselves tidy and clean and ready for the party.

What a party it was too! All the Farmyard Folk came, without exception, and each one in turn said, "How do you do," politely to Hepzibah and thanked her for being so kind as to have asked them.

"Surely the strangers are coming," said Chirabel Chicken suddenly, when almost every one else had arrived. "And fancy Gertie Grunter being late for a meal!"

"Most unusual," agreed Kathleen Cow. "She

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must have forgotten to wake up from her after-dinner nap, but she's sure to come."



And she was right, for at that moment Gertie Grunter appeared round the corner of the barn, running as hard as she could run, and looking terribly anxious lest the others should have started eating before she arrived. She was running so fast that she couldn't stop when she came to the Cart Lodge, and, before any one could offer so much as a chirrup of warning, she had fallen headlong into the basket of thistles.

Then poor Gertie Grunter opened her mouth and squealed in the most unhappy way, and kicked and struggled and tried to pull herself out. And the more she struggled, the more the thistles pricked her, and the more they pricked her, the more she squealed. All the other animals hurried round, suggesting things that she ought to do, and trying to pull her out, and everybody talked



a great deal. It was Kathleen Cow who finally rescued her by pushing over the basket with her nose.

Then it was Hepzibah's turn to look unhappy. "Look at my beautiful thistles!" she cried. "All crushed and spoilt! What shall I do about Alphonso Ass?" And she looked at Gertie Grunter, who

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was busy pulling out prickles, in a very unsympathetic way.

"Doesn't matter," said Cuthbert Cockerel. "He can share the carrots with Dorcas."

So they carried the thistles away and hid them behind the Cart Lodge, so that Alphonso should not see them and feel disappointed.

They were just getting back to the party when Hepzibah gave a cry and ran forward in a terrible hustle and excitement.

"See!" she cried. "See what Gertie Grunter has done—she's eaten every carrot, and now I have no food at all for Dorcas Donkey and Alphonso Ass."

And it was quite true—Gertie Grunter had been so busy trying to forget her pricks from the thistles, that she had forgotten her party manners too, and had absent-mindedly eaten every carrot!

At that moment they heard footsteps, and into

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the Cart Lodge walked Dorcas Donkey and Alphonso Ass.

“I’m sorry we’re late,” said Dorcas.

“You must excuse us,” said Alphonso.

“What delicious-looking hay,” said Dorcas, and

“We’re so hungry, please may we begin,” said Alphonso.

And to Hepzibah’s great delight they settled down comfortably and ate a large meal of hay, and enjoyed the party as much as anybody there — which was a great deal, for everybody always said that Hepzibah was the best hostess in the Farmyard.

CHAPTER IV

In Which Reginald Rat Appears

REGINALD RAT sat bolt upright and listened. He listened very carefully, first with one ear and then with the other ear, and then with both ears at once.

He had just come, through a tunnel of his own making, into the Great Big Barn, to nibble off a piece of Oat Cake in the dark, partly because it was good to eat, but most particularly because it would annoy Kathleen Cow, and Reginald Rat liked annoying other people more than anything else in the whole world. He did it very well, too. He annoyed Gertie Grunter by eating her food—he annoyed Hepzibah Hen by stealing her eggs—he annoyed the Farmer by making holes in



everything that it was possible to make holes in—and he always managed to escape when they were angry because he could run faster than any one else in the whole Farmyard. But there was just *one* person he was afraid of, and that was Barney, the Barndoor Owl.

He listened carefully, but there was not a sound, so on he went and started to nibble off a good big slab of Oat Cake.

“I see you! I see you!!” said a voice very suddenly from the rafters above him.

It was so sudden and so just above him that it made Reginald Rat jump right up into the air in his fright. As soon as he reached the ground again, he turned and ran just as fast as he could, down the tunnel and out into the open Farmyard. Really, his nerves were in a very bad state—his was not the happy, peaceful life it had been before Barney came to live in the Farmyard. Why, he was hardly able to annoy anybody now without

In Which Reginald Rat Appears 33

two large eyes gazing down at him from the middle of a bunch of feathers—and Barney *had* such a sharp beak and such very spiky claws.

On went Reginald until he came to the Cart Lodge where Hepzibah Hen lived.

“An egg will do just as well,” he muttered to himself. “And it will be such fun to see what Hepzibah says when she finds that it is gone!” He found it at last—a neat little brown egg, lying in a bundle of hay; but just as he was going to pull it out there was a flutter in the rafters above, and once more the same voice said, in the same sudden and startling and very near way:

“I see you! I see you!! I see you!!!”

Reginald Rat went. He went just as quickly as he could, and he tried to look as if he had just been visiting the egg in a friendly way, and that now he had finished his visit and must get along home.

He hurried on until he found an inviting hole in the wall, and then he stopped to think. It really

seemed very difficult to annoy any one to-night—but never mind, he would go to Sty House, and see if he could not carry off some of Gertie Grunter's food while Gertie Grunter was asleep. That would be much more fun than anything else, because she was so very fond of her food, and was so particularly annoyed and angry if anybody took away even a little bit.

In went Reginald Rat—very quickly and very quietly. The trough was quite empty, which was disappointing—but underneath one side of it was a large green acorn. Reginald could not help chuckling to himself as he picked it up, because Gertie did love acorns and she would be so disappointed.

“Ha, ha, ha!” he laughed. “Ha, ha, ha!” But the last “Ha” stopped short in the middle, for there was a flutter of wings in the doorway, and very near him indeed just the same voice said several times over:



Reginald Rat and the Barn Owl

In Which Reginald Rat Appears 35

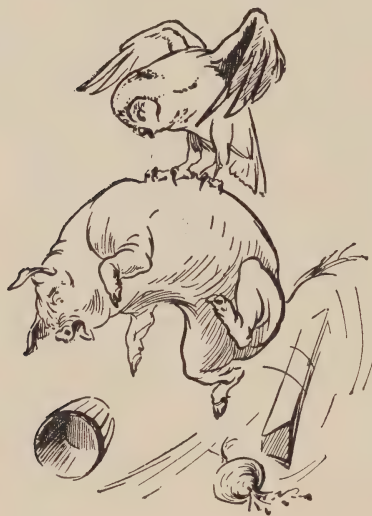
“I see you!—I see you!!—I see you!!!—
I see you!!!!”

This time Reginald was too frightened even to drop the acorn, and he turned and scurried toward the door as fast as he could go. He had barely reached it, when there was the most terrible noise that seemed to fill not only Sty House, but the whole Farmyard. What had happened was this—Barney, having fluttered once round the house and found no rafter of any kind, flew down and perched gently on Gertie Grunter’s back. And the trouble was that what Barney thought was perching gently, Gertie Grunter did not consider gentle at all—and, anyway, as she explained afterwards, “Anybody would be startled if they were waked up suddenly by a large fluffy Owl, who perched on their back and cried out, ‘I see you! I see you! I see you!’”

Certainly Gertie Grunter was startled, and she didn’t even try to pretend that she wasn’t; but

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opened her mouth and let out the most piercing squeaks and screams that a pig can make. She



made such a noise that she woke up the whole Farmyard. Then Hepzibah Hen began to chatter, and Cuthbert Cockerel began to crow, and Kathleen Cow began to moo, and everybody in the Farmyard began to make just as much noise as he possibly

could, so that he should not feel out of it at all.

But Reginald Rat took no notice of any of them. He ran out of Sty House and across the cobbled yard. Faster he ran—faster, and faster still, and behind him flew Barny the Barndoor Owl, and behind him ran Gertie Grunter, and behind Gertie

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came all the rest of the Farmyard Folk—all of them very much awake now, and each one asking



the next why they were running, and what it was all about.

Right across the cobble yard ran Reginald, the Farmyard Folk close behind him, and in under the door of the Cow Shed. But he was not safe there, for out of the darkness Kathleen Cow looked down at him with her two large brown eyes, and she puffed and snuffed at him in such a way that he ran out again faster even than he had run in. On he went, running along by the side of the

hedge, and then through it and right out into the lane.

He never stopped until he had gone a very long way from the Farmyard, and then he had to settle down and rest, and think of making a quite new home for himself, for he never felt brave enough to go back again.

And all the Farmyard Folk were very grateful to Barny the Barndoor Owl. They liked to hear him at night as he flew about among the barns, calling out to himself as he flew, "I see you! I see you!" just for they knew very friendly really, and they felt much safer when he was about.



CHAPTER V

In Which Hepzibah is Puzzled by a Most Mysterious Egg

IT was hatching day, and Hepzibah Hen was feeling quite the most busy and important person in the whole Farmyard. She ran hither and thither, backwards and forwards, in what she thought was a most business-like way, though Gertie Grunter considered it rather fussy and absurd. But Hepzibah didn't mind a bit what *she* said, and bustled about the Cart Lodge feeling very proud indeed, while her family of six yellow chickens told each other just what they thought about everything in their funny little high-pitched voices.

There was only one egg now left unhatched—a much bigger egg than any of the others had

been. It was really rather a mysterious kind of egg, and nobody quite knew where it had come from. Hepzibah had not laid it—she was quite sure of that. It had arrived quite suddenly all by itself.

“I left the Cart Lodge for only a moment,” she had explained to Cuthbert Cockerel. “And there were only six eggs when I went. But when I came back there was this big one right in the middle of all the others. It really is a very funny thing.”

Cuthbert Cockerel said he had seen the Farmer himself go into the Cart Lodge, and that probably *he* had laid it there. But Hepzibah didn't think so, because she didn't really believe that the Farmer *could* lay an egg.

Anyway there the egg was, as large as life, and considerably larger than any other egg that Hepzibah had ever seen.

“I must have another look at it,” she said, and

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she hurried across the Cart Lodge. But it was too late. The eggshells lay broken in the nest, and by the side of them stood a really most peculiar-looking person.

“Er—er—good-afternoon,” said Hepzibah, but the Peculiar-Looking Person said nothing at all. He just stood and blinked at Hepzibah in a dazed sort of way. It was all very odd, and Hepzibah didn’t know quite what to do about it. But the rest of the family seemed to welcome him as one of themselves, and soon he was running about with the six little chickens as if it was all quite the usual thing.

“Dear! Dear!” said Hepzibah Hen. “This is really very odd and peculiar—he’s not at all like any of the others—and not a *bit* like my eldest, Chirabel Chicken.”

She kept him hidden in the Cart Lodge as much as possible in case the other Farmyard Folk should laugh at him.

The Hepzibah Hen Book

Next day when she was out in the Meadow looking for grain, she met Kathleen Cow.

“Good-mooorning!” said Kathleen Cow, in a friendly kind of way. “And how are the family getting on?”

“Very well, thank you,” said Hepzibah. “At least, that is, a very odd thing indeed has happened —” And she told Kathleen Cow all about the Most Peculiar-Looking Person.

“Dear me,” said Kathleen Cow. “Dear me — very strange — very strange indeed!”

“Yes, isn’t it!” said Hepzibah. “And he’s not in the least like any of my other children — not a *bit* like Chirabel Chicken.”

But Kathleen Cow couldn’t suggest anything that was really helpful, so Hepzibah wished her a very good day and hurried back to her family in the Cart Lodge.

The next day she took them all for a walk in the Farmyard, and, as the Peculiar-Looking

A Most Mysterious Egg 43

Person would not be left at home alone, she had to take him too.

People did stare at them as they went through the Yard! But they were all very nice about it, and turned away quickly as soon as they knew that Hepzibah had seen them looking. Passing Sty House was the worst. Gertie Grunter happened to be looking out of the door as they went by, and she stared and stared and went on staring, and then gave a funny little grunting laugh that Hepzibah thought was most unpleasant.

"My dear, what *is* it?" asked Gwendolin Goose, who was a particular friend of Hepzibah's.

So Hepzibah told her all about the mysterious egg and how very odd it all was. "He talks in such a funny way too," she said. "Just like some one blowing bubbles—not in the least like any of the family—not a *bit* like Chirabel Chicken!"

Gwendolin agreed that it certainly *was* very odd, but she hadn't any suggestions to offer.

44 *The Hepzibah Hen Book*

Nor had Dulcima Duck from the pond near by, nor Connie Cart Horse, nor Chirabel Chicken herself, who had turned into quite a grown-up sort of person these days. The only one who was quite happy about it all was the Peculiar-Looking Person himself. He played about with the chicken family and grew bigger and bigger every day. And every day he grew more and more talkative, and Hepzibah grew more and more certain that his voice reminded her of some sound that she knew quite well.

One day, as they were looking for grain in the Rickyard they came suddenly round the corner of a haystack and ran right into Taraxacum Turkey.

“Oh, dear!” said Hepzibah Hen, picking herself up and fluffing out her feathers. “Oh, dear! Very careless of us to come round so quickly. I do hope no one is hurt.”

But Taraxacum Turkey took no notice of her

A Most Mysterious Egg 45

at all. He just stood there with his great tail spread out behind him and stared and stared at the Peculiar-Looking Person.



“Where did he come from?” he thundered, and directly Hepzibah heard his voice she knew that *that* was the sound she had been thinking of all the time.

“I—er—don’t know!” said Hepzibah, getting very flustered. “I—er—never thought of asking

you — you being a bachelor and not very fond of children and —”

But Taraxacum Turkey would not listen,



“*That,*” he thundered, “is a young Turkey! *You* do not know how to bring up TURKEYS. Come with me, young Bubbly Jock!” And he turned and stalked away followed by the Peculiar-

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Looking Person, who seemed very glad to have found some one who really understood him at last.

“Dear, dear, dear!” said Hepzibah Hen in a dazed sort of way as she watched them go across the Rickyard. “What a very odd thing, to be sure!” And “Cheep! Cheep! Cheep! Cheep!” said all the little chickens.



CHAPTER VI

In Which Gertie Grunter is Taken Ill

GWENDOLIN GOOSE opened her mouth very wide and yawned loudly for the third time within the last five minutes.

"Bother Gertie Grunter!" she said, blinking sleepily. "I hardly slept a wink all night—and I don't expect any one else did either!"



"No," said Dulcima Duck. "But one can't help feeling sorry for the Pig. It's toothache, you know; she told me so herself."

Gertie Grunter certainly did *not* look well. She forgot to eat her supper for two nights running,

Gertie Grunter is Taken Ill 49

so all the Farmyard Folk knew that she must be very bad indeed. And then she simply lay and groaned outside Sty House most of the day and all the night, which kept everybody awake, and was altogether a great pity.

"Surely we can do something for her," said Hepzibah Hen, who, although she was not a particular friend of Gertie Grunter's, was a very kind-hearted sort of person.

"Don't know of anything," said Cuthbert Cockerel. "But I do wish we could," he added, yawning loudly.

"Such bad toothache it must be too!" went on Hepzibah. "I think I'll go and ask Kathleen Cow."



50 *The Hepzibah Hen Book*

She found Kathleen Cow blinking sleepily in the sunshine.

"Poor Gertie Grunter," agreed Kathleen Cow. "Moaning? Yes, I heard her moaning all night. Most painful thing, toothache." And Kathleen Cow yawned too.

"Shocking thing to have," said Hepzibah. "Can't you think of anything to make it better?"

Kathleen Cow thought for a moment or two.

"Most people say that clover's a good thing," she said at last. "At least they say 'cloves,' and 'cloves' is the short for clover, isn't it?"

"I should think so," said Hepzibah. "Let's go and pick some clover for her."

So together Kathleen Cow and Hepzibah went into the Meadow and picked a large bunch of pink clover for Gertie Grunter.

"Oh, dear!" moaned Gertie Grunter. "I don't want anything to eat. Oh, dear!"

Gertie Grunter is Taken Ill 51

"Poor Gertie," said Kathleen Cow. "She must be feeling bad!"

"Shocking!" agreed Hepzibah. "But here's some nice clover for you, Gertie. Do we have to make her eat it, do you think?"

"I don't know," answered Kathleen Cow. "Perhaps if she smells it, it will do."

So they put the bunch of clover down beside Gertie Grunter, and sat and waited for her toothache to get better.

"Oh, dear!" groaned Gertie Grunter. "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!! OH, DEAR!!!"

"Don't think the clover's doing her much good. Do you?" asked Kathleen.

"Doesn't seem to be," agreed Hepzibah. "Let's go and ask Dorcas Donkey and Alphonso Ass if they can think of anything."

Dorcas Donkey and Alphonso Ass were very sympathetic indeed.

"Yes, we've heard her groaning," said Alphonso.

52 *The Hepzibah Hen Book*

"All night," added Dorcas—and *they* both yawned.

"Poor Gertie!" said Kathleen Cow.

"I *have* heard that painting the tooth is a good thing," suggested Dorcas.

"And I know where some paint is," said Alphonso, nodding toward the door of the Old Barn, where stood a bucket half full of newly mixed whitewash.

"Just the thing!" cried Hepzibah, and hustled off toward the bucket as fast as she could go.

Between them they carried it along to Sty House. Gertie Grunter didn't like the idea at all—in fact she struggled quite a lot in a most ungrateful kind of way. She wasn't even pleased when Hepzibah lent one of her very best feathers to be used as a paint-brush. They managed it at last, though, Alphonso Ass holding one side of her mouth and Dorcas Donkey the other, while Kathleen Cow sat upon her tail. Hepzibah held

Gertie Grunter is Taken Ill 53



the brush and painted each one of her teeth carefully all over, as poor Gertie didn't seem at all sure just which was the tooth that ached.

Then they sat down in a circle and waited for Gertie's groans to cease.

"Oh, dear!" said Gertie Grunter. "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!! OH, DEAR!!!"

"Don't seem to have done her much good, do you?" said Cuthbert Cockerel, who had come to see what was happening.

"Poor Gertie Grunter!" said Kathleen Cow,

shaking her head sadly. "She seems worse than she was before."

"Shall we see if any one else can suggest anything?" said Hepzibah, and they all went together into the Rickyard. There they found Taraxacum Turkey, looking very ruffled and sleepy, and not a little cross.

"Pull it out, of course," he snapped, when they asked him his opinion.

"Splendid idea!" cried Hepzibah, flapping her wings up and down with excitement. "Why didn't we think of that before?"

"Don't think Gertie Grunter will like it," said Kathleen Cow, doubtfully; but none of the others would listen to what she said, and they all hurried about the Farmyard to find a piece of rope to pull it out with.

"Here's some," called Dorcas Donkey, from behind a hay-rick.

"Yes, this will do," said Alphonso Ass, and

Gertie Grunter is Taken Ill 55

together they pulled out a long piece of twine which had been mixed up with the hay.

Then came the discussion as to who should tell Gertie Grunter.

"I know she won't let us do it!" said Kathleen Cow.

"She must!" cried Hepzibah. "It's good for her!"

"Yes," said Dorcas. "And I'm so sleepy."

"So am I," added Alphonso Ass.

"Nonsense—all this," broke in Taraxacum Turkey. "Of *course* we must do it! Why, no one in the Farmyard has been able to sleep for two nights. We must do it suddenly—rush it upon her—then she won't have time to object."

But Gertie Grunter did object; she squealed and kicked in such a whole-hearted manner that it was very difficult indeed to get anywhere near her. But she struggled in vain. They held her down and tied the twine very firmly and tightly



round her left front tooth. (They were not sure that this *was* the tooth with the ache in it, but Gertie seemed to squeal rather louder when they touched this one than any of the others.)

“Stop!” she gurgled. “Stop! I—I haven’t—” But she could say no more because of the twine in her mouth.

“Never mind!” said Kathleen Cow. “Be a brave Pig. Soon be out, you know.”

Taraxacum Turkey took hold of the rope very firmly. Behind him came Dorcas Donkey and then



Alphonso Ass, and then, one by one, all the Farmyard Folk. Hepzibah stood by the side to see that everything went quite right.

“One—two—three—Pull!” she cried, and they all pulled. Tighter and tighter they clasped the rope, and harder and harder they pulled, till suddenly there was a loud snap—the twine broke in half and all the Farmyard Folk fell in a mass on top of one another in the mud outside Sty House.

“Oh, dear!” gasped Gertie Grunter, sobbing for breath. “Go away—I—I—it wasn’t toothache at all!”

58 *The Hepzibah Hen Book*

One by one the Farmyard Folk picked themselves out of the mud, and prepared to have another tug at Gertie Grunter's tooth.

"Go away!" squealed Gertie Grunter. "I haven't got toothache — I've never had toothache — I —"

"Then what's all this noise been about?" asked Taraxacum Turkey.

"Green apples," sobbed Gertie Grunter. "G-g-g-green apples. But I thought you'd all say I'd been greedy, so I called it toothache!"

CHAPTER VII

In Which the Farmyard Becomes a Fashionable Place

SHEILA SHEEP started it all by having her hair cut.

Kathleen Cow brought the news when she returned from the Meadow one evening.

“Most peculiar! Most unusual!” she kept on saying over and over again to herself in a mysterious kind of way, until she was quite sure that all the other Farmyard Folk were feeling really inquisitive and interested. Then she told them all about it.



"You'd hardly recognize her now," she ended mournfully. "All her hair's been cut off, and she looks a very different Sheep. Shingled she called it—said it was very fashionable."

"Fashionable Fiddlesticks!" said Taraxacum Turkeycrossly. "Shingled indeed! It was always called 'shearing' in my young days. And, anyway, who wants to be fashionable, I should like to know?" And he bustled away angrily.

Sheila Sheep certainly did look very smart. She came into the Farmyard later on in the evening and, of course, everybody had to come out and see her, though they all pretended to be very busy doing something else.

And then, of course, everybody began wanting to be fashionable too. Hepzibah Hen spent hours daily polishing her beak in the dust, and Gertie Grunter lay awake at nights with her tail in a curling pin. Even Taraxacum Turkey was seen behind a haystack busily arranging his tail at ex-

Farmyard Becomes Fashionable 61

actly the right angle, while Dulcima Duck complained that it was next to impossible to get near the pond in the morning, there were so many people using it as a looking-glass.

Chirabel Chicken, alone, remained the same.

"It's no good," she said sadly one afternoon. "My beak won't polish really well, and my tail won't curl, and Hepzibah won't let me use machine oil to make my feathers shine."

"Most unfortunate!" said Kathleen Cow, and went away to comb her tail.

"Awfully awkward," agreed Dorcas Donkey, and

"Yes, very," added Alphonso Ass, and they went off to try on new halters.



62 *The Hepzibah Hen Book*

Soon there was no one left but Gertie Grunter, and then, quite suddenly, she looked up and winked—yes, *winked!*

Chirabel Chicken felt quite frightened at first, for Gertie Grunter really did look very odd with one of her little eyes tight shut and the other one looking extra specially knowing. Then she felt uncomfortable—and then she felt as if she ought to say something. So she said:

“Yes, isn’t it!”—and hoped for the best.

Then Gertie Grunter smiled in a friendly kind of way, and, looking round to make sure that no one could hear, she said in a hoarse whisper:

“I’ve got such a good idea!—make you look a really fashionable Chicken! Why you’d be as handsome as Sheila Sheep herself!” And, beckoning with her snout, she trotted off to Sty House.

Now Chirabel didn’t really like Gertie Grunter, and was sometimes even just a little bit afraid of

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her—she was such a big and bristly sort of person. But still she *did* want to look smart, like everybody else, so she followed Gertie Grunter slowly to Sty House.

Gertie Grunter was very kind, and insisted on her having something to eat first, and then they talked, and talked, and talked.

That afternoon was Kathleen Cow's tea-party, and every single person in the whole Farmyard had been invited. It was a matter of great excitement and everybody was busy trying to look his best. It was even rumored that Dulcima Duck had painted three of her feathers green with some paint she had found at the back of the barn, and certainly Cuthbert Cockerel was looking taller and sleeker than he had ever looked before.

"Surely Chirabel hasn't forgotten," said Hepzibah Hen, running backwards and forwards outside the door of the Cart Lodge. "We shall be

64 *The Hepzibah Hen Book*

late if she doesn't come soon! So careless of her! Where can she be?"

"Doesn't matter, does it?" said Cuthbert Cockerel, carefully arranging his longest tail feather. "We can go on without her. She's probably there already."

"Suppose so," said Hepzibah. "She should have waited for us, though. I'm sure we'll be late."

But Chirabel Chicken was not at the party, and what's more, none of the other guests had seen or heard anything of her for quite a long time.

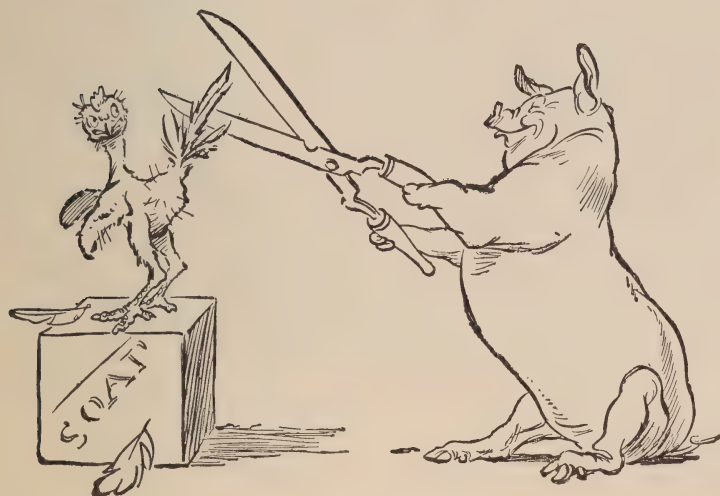
"Must be somewhere!" said Kathleen Cow. "I shouldn't worry if I were you. Why, Gertie Grunter hasn't come yet, either."

But when after tea came and still no Chirabel, Hepzibah really began to get very flustered indeed. So much so that, at Kathleen Cow's suggestion, they turned the tea-party into a search-party and all went out to look for Chirabel. They all started off separately, each person go-

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ing in a different direction, and hunted over the whole Farmyard. It was Dulcima Duck who first caught sight of her.

“Quick! Quick!! Quick!!!” she cried, flapping



her wings about in an agitated kind of way. “Here she is! In Sty House, and Gertie Grunter has got a great big scissors and is cutting off all her feathers!”

Then Hepzibah Hen began to run, and Cuthbert Cockerel began to run, and every one in the whole Farmyard started running just as hard as he could toward Sty House. But it was too late. They arrived just in time to see the last of Chirabel's feathers—which were not yet fully grown—cut right in halves by the large scissors Gertie Grunter was holding.

Hepzibah Hen *was* angry.

"Surely you don't think you look nice?" she cried, pointing an indignant claw at Chirabel, while it was all the other animals could do to prevent her flying at Gertie Grunter and pecking her quite hard.

"Oh, well, you know," said Gertie Grunter, trying not to look guilty, "I did it only to please the Chicken, you know. She thought she would like to be shingled like Sheila Sheep and . . ."

But no one was listening to Gertie Grunter, for at that moment the Farmer and his son were

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seen strolling through the Farmyard in a business-like way, and it was always better to be out of sight at such times.

"Where's that plump chicken I saw the other day?" he said as he came along.

"Don't know," said the son, looking about the Yard. "Think you must have been mistaken; there's only that scarecrow over there." And he pointed to the sad and bedraggled Chirabel Chicken.

"Pity," said the Farmer. "It would have done so nicely for dinner." And they went on into the road.

The Farmyard heaved a sigh of relief, and Hepzibah positively clucked with pride at the clever way her daughter had disguised herself.

But still, nobody thought that Chirabel looked *beautiful*, and after that every one gave up trying to be fashionable, and even Sheila Sheep let her hair grow long in time.

CHAPTER VIII

In Which Hepzibah Hen Has an Adventure

“SUCH an oversight!” said Hepzibah Hen for the twentieth time that morning. “I really can’t understand it at all. Fancy forgetting to take *me* — ME!”

“Most unfortunate,” agreed Kathleen Cow in an uninterested kind of way, blinking sleepily in the sunlight.

It was the day of the County Agricultural Show, and, except for these two, the Farmyard was deserted. The early morning had been a time of tremendous hustle, shouting, and running to and fro, as, one by one, the Farmyard Folk had all been packed away into baskets and wagons and driven out of the Yard — all, that is, except Kathleen Cow and Hepzibah Hen.

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Kathleen Cow didn't mind at all—said she didn't care for such things—"much too frivolous and energetic for me." But with Hepzibah Hen it was quite a different matter, and Gertie Grunter, the Prize Pig, had smiled at her in an almost patronizing manner as she drove through the Great Gates and on to the Road beyond.

"Surely they must be coming back to fetch me later," she said hopefully. But Kathleen Cow seemed to have quite gone to sleep this time, so Hepzibah wandered off to the Rickyard by herself, muttering as she went.

"Such a disappointment it will be to them when they find out! Dear, dear, dear! I wonder how many prizes I should have won."

She was so busy wondering and muttering to herself that she never noticed a tall, dark figure creep slowly up behind her. It was the figure of a Man—a large man with a torn coat and a dirty



face—not a bit like the Farmer's son, or any one else who usually came into the Farmyard.

The first thing that Hepzibah noticed was a dirty bit of sacking being thrown over her head, and two large hands taking a firm hold of her.

"Go away!" she cried, flapping her wings wildly against the sacking. "Get away!—What do you want? Let go! Help! Help!"

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She screamed and she kicked and she struggled. She tried her hardest, and, being at no time a quiet kind of person, she managed now to make enough noise to call together the whole Farmyard in the usual course of events. But—there was no one there. Only Kathleen Cow, and she was asleep!

“Choking me—that’s what you’re doing!” gasped Hepzibah, and kicked and struggled harder than ever. But it made no difference at all to the two large hands. They picked her up, wrapped her round in the brown sacking still more carefully, and fitted her into a large coat pocket.

Then began for Hepzibah the most terrifying journey she had ever known. It was quite dark in the big pocket, and so hot and stuffy that she was positively gasping for breath.

Jolt, jolt, jolt—on and on they went, and Hepzibah was far too frightened even to wonder where they were going. At last they came to a

standstill, and she heard the rumble of a voice:

“Let’s see what you’ve got, Mate,” and once more the two large hands clasped her firmly, and lifted her out of the pocket.

“I’m afraid it’s only an old boiling fowl this time—couldn’t find anything else,” came the reply.

Boiling Fowl! Hepzibah Hen an Old Boiling Fowl! At any other time she would have resented this strongly, but now she was far too tired and frightened to do anything at all about it. She just lay limply where she had been thrown on the ground, still wrapped round in the dirty bit of sacking.

“Leave it alone for to-night—we’ll pluck it in the morning.”

Yes, that was what the voice had said—
“WE’LL PLUCK IT IN THE MORNING.”

Hepzibah Hen fainted.

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Hepzibah Has an Adventure 73

Early that evening the wagons rumbled back into the Farmyard, and one by one all the Farmyard Folk stepped out of their baskets, some carrying red cards and some blue, and some with no cards at all.

Suddenly there was a cry from Chirabel Chicken.

"Can't find Hepzibah anywhere, and I should so like to tell her about the Show."

"Don't know where she is," said Cuthbert Cockerel. "I was looking for her myself."

Then they began to get really frightened, and every one in the Farmyard joined in the search—even Gertie Grunter, who did not usually bother about other people very much—but still no sign of Hepzibah Hen.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear. Where *can* she be?" sobbed Chirabel Chicken, now in a terrible state of fuss and bother. "How ever are we going to find her?"



Then Dorcas Donkey, who had been thinking hard for some time, said quite suddenly:

“Let’s ask Shirley Sheepdog to help us!”

“Yes—let’s,” agreed Alphonso Ass.

It was growing dusk when Hepzibah Hen again opened her eyes. She could just see—out of a little hole in the sacking—two men with their backs turned to her, smoking funny-smelling tobacco and talking together in low voices.

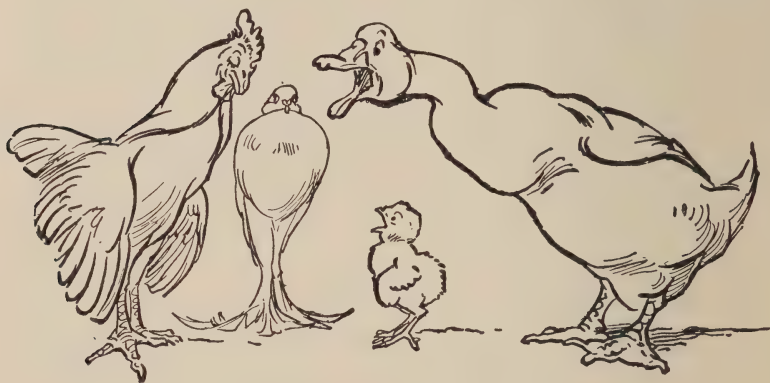
Hepzibah Has an Adventure 75

"Surely I can manage to escape now," she thought to herself, and raised herself cautiously on one wing—but only to discover that her feet were tied together and she could not move. No, there was nothing for it, she was really caught, and she began to shake in every feather with fright as she thought of the Morning and what the terrible Man had said.

All of a sudden she saw through her little hole a shaggy figure at the end of the field, coming quickly toward them with his nose to the ground as though he were tracking something. Nearer and nearer he came, and suddenly, with a barely suppressed squawk of joy, she recognized Shirley Sheepdog from her own Farmyard.



"Don't make a sound," he whispered, and picked her up in his mouth, sacking and all. Just as he was starting off across the field one of the men turned round, and, with a shout, leapt to his feet and began to run after them. But Shirley



Sheepdog was good at this sort of thing. He was over the field and under the gate before the two men were halfway across it, and, before very long, he arrived panting and breathless, back in the Farmyard once more, with Hepzibah and the sacking clasped firmly in his mouth.

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"Where have you been?"—"What have you been doing?"—Everybody crowded round her, all talking at once and asking all sorts of questions.

Bit by bit Hepzibah gasped out her story, feeling a very Important Kind of Person indeed.

"It was wonderful to see Shirley Sheepdog coming along," she said at last, "and to know that he had really rescued me—wonderful!"

"Wonderful?" said Gertie Grunter, who had not been listening very hard up till then. "Yes, wasn't it wonderful me getting First Prize at the Show—but only to be expected, you know—only to be expected!"

CHAPTER IX

In Which the Farmyard Folk Play Hide-and-Seek

“LET’s play Hide-and-Seek!” said Alphonso Ass, flapping one of his long ears idly in the sunshine one hot September afternoon.

“Yes, let’s!” said Dorcas Donkey. And as it was Alphonso’s birthday, most of the Farmyard Folk said they would play too—just to oblige Alphonso Ass, of course.

“Must I play?” asked Kathleen Cow sleepily. “I’d *much* rather watch—you see, I’m not like you others. There’s so much of me, and so few places to hide it in—and, anyway, I’d *much* rather watch.” And having made this, for her, very long speech, Kathleen Cow shut both her eyes and went fast asleep again.

So they left her alone and every one went off

to hide except Alphonso Ass who was chosen as "he."

It was a good game, and he only managed to catch Taraxacum Turkey before they all arrived



back at the Big Gate, which they had arranged should be "home"—all, that is, except Gertie Grunter.

"She must have found a good place!" said

Taraxacum, wishing he had thought of it himself, and Alphonso Ass went off to have another hunt. But it was no good, and before long all the others had joined in the search. They hunted and hunted, but all to no avail, until suddenly Chirabel Chicken came running back—her feathers all fluffed up with excitement—to say that there was “such a funny noise coming from the new Granary.”

They all hurried to the new Granary as fast as they could go—and there most certainly was a very funny sound coming from behind the door—a kind of frightened squealing noise which trailed off into a grunt.

“You in there, Gertie Grunter?” shouted Alphonso Ass, and the squeal grew louder than ever—this time quite unmistakably Gertie Grunter’s voice.

“Insufferable person!” said Taraxacum Turkey—he had got very hot poking about in all the wrong places. “Of course it’s just the sort of place

that Gertie Grunter *would* choose. But what I want to know is—how did she get in?”

“Got in through the door,” cried the muffled voice from within. “And then I suppose I must have bumped against it, for it blew shut, and now it won’t open, and I can’t get out—and—and—the granary’s *empty!*”

“Terribly greedy!” said Taraxacum Turkey. “Terribly greedy!—serves her right, and I shall take absolutely no more interest in the proceedings.” And he strutted off by himself up the Rickyard.

The other Farmyard Folk looked at each other in a puzzled kind of way, and then sat down in a ring outside the new Granary door to have a good think. Certain it was that the door was shut and that it was a strong door with a strong lock, so there was no hope of breaking it open and getting her out that way.

“Surely there must be some other way,” said

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Hepzibah, looking hopefully up at the tightly barred window. "She'll starve if she has to stay in there much longer."

At that there was a most terrible squeal from inside the Granary, and sounds of heavy thuds and bumps as Gertie Grunter threw her whole weight against the door.

"Quite useless to do that!" said Dulcima. "The Farmer's had a specially strong lock fixed."

"Most unfortunate!" said Kathleen Cow. "Most unfortunate indeed! The grain's kept in the shed next to mine now, and sometimes nobody goes into the new Granary for days at a time."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" cried Gertie Grunter. "I had such a hurried lunch, and now it must be long past tea-time, and I'm so hungry—so hungry!"

"Hot in there?" asked Cuthbert Cockerel cheerfully.

"Only a little," said Gertie. "There's an open window in the roof that lets the air in."

Then Alphonso Ass had a good idea.

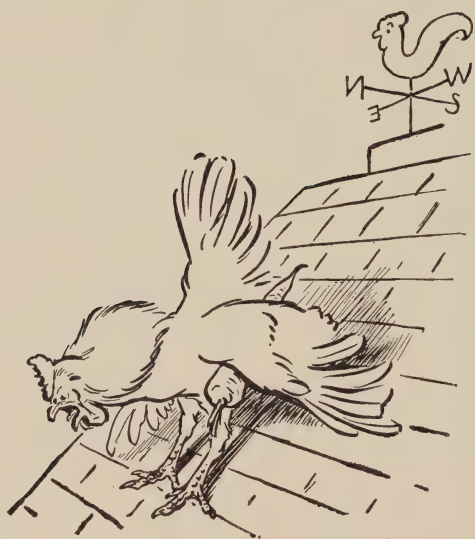
"If there's a window in the roof," he said, "couldn't one of you people fly up there and drop in some food? Then she wouldn't starve!"

"Good idea!" cried Gertie, kicking heavily against the door in her excitement. "Quick, quick! I'm so hungry!"

But Dulcima Duck pretended she hadn't heard, and Cuthbert Cockerel said he had no head for heights. Chirabel Chicken would have tried, but Hepzibah wouldn't let her, so there was nothing for it but for Hepzibah to go herself.

"Such a pity I'm not very good at flying!" she said, and she tucked a carrot under her wing and climbed carefully onto Alphonso's head to give herself a good start. "Sure I shall never get there—dear, dear—poor Gertie Grunter! How grateful she'll be! Such a place to hide in—now—one,

two, three, Go!" And she fluttered and flapped and scrambled up onto the roof of the Granary and along to where she could see the window.



"It's shut!" she cried, as soon as she could get her breath back.

"That's the wrong one," said Gertie Grunter blinking up at her from inside. "It's the other one that's open."

So Hepzibah had to climb right up the tiles to the top of the roof and down the other side.

"Such a difficult business!" she gasped, as she got to the top at last. But getting down the other side was even worse. The tiles were so slippery

that there was nothing for it but to put her feet together and slide—and then, too late, she realized that she could not stop.

“Help! Help!!” she cried. Then she lost her foothold altogether, and rolled over and over down the roof and then—“plop”—in at the half-open window, and right down into the new Granary.

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Early next morning the Farmer took down his bunch of keys and went to make sure that the new Granary was quite ready for the load of corn which he was expecting that day. He unlocked the door and flung it open.

Suddenly there was a peculiar squealing noise, something seemed to rush between his legs, and the next moment he lay on his face in the doorway.

Now the floor of the Granary was made of stone, and the Farmer was a large man, and he got up feeling anything but pleased. The first



thing he saw was Hepzibah Hen, roosting on the corner of an empty bin.

“So it was *you* did that, was it?” he cried, and rushed forward toward Hepzibah, waving his stick in the air. Hepzibah had only just time to slip down to the ground and run—run as she had never run before—out of the door and right across the Farmyard, the Farmer close behind waving his stick in a most threatening kind of way.

“Help! Help!” cried Hepzibah once again, flapping her wings up and down in her terror:

and then, dodging suddenly sideways, she dashed into Sty House, where the Farmer could not follow.

“Good-morning!” said Gertie Grunter. “You seem in a hurry!” And then she went out to talk to the Farmer, who scratched her back with his long stick and gave her an apple from his pocket.

“Just as if nothing had happened!” said Hepzibah indignantly, when she was telling Kathleen Cow all about it. “And it was Gertie Grunter who knocked him down, too—she always does lose her head when she gets excited.”

“Most unfriendly,” said Kathleen Cow mournfully. “And I never did think much of Hide-and-Seek. I’d much rather watch.”

“Specially if the Farmer is ‘he,’” said Hepzibah Hen.

CHAPTER X

In Which Hepzibah is Given Some Goshes to Keep Her Feet Dry

"SURELY it must stop raining soon!" said Hepzibah Hen, looking down from her perch on the lowest rafter in the Cart Lodge.

"Don't expect it will," answered Cuthbert Cockerel. "And, anyway, the Farmyard's much too wet to go out in, even if it does."

At that moment there was a splashing sound, and up waddled Dulcima Duck with a cheery smile on her bill.

"Quite seasonable weather, isn't it?" she cried, waving a wing cheerfully at Hepzibah, with little drops of water dripping from every feather. "Just stopping now, though, I'm afraid." And sure enough as she spoke, the rain gradually grew less and less, and then stopped altogether.

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"Seasonable!" said Hepzibah, fluttering down to the ground. "Yes, I suppose it is seasonable. —Such a pity there has to be this kind of season at all, though. It's so wet underfoot now that it *has* stopped raining, and I really *did* want to go to that Sowing Party this afternoon."

"Just off there myself," said Dulcima Duck. "Quite sure you won't come too? Well, well, perhaps you're right, I know some people don't like rain. What *you* want is a pair of goloshes." And off she waddled up the Rickyard.

"What's goloshes?" cried Hepzibah Hen, standing on tiptoe to make her voice carry farther.

"Oh—things that people have, to keep their feet dry," shouted Dulcima over her shoulder, and then paddled on out of sight.

"She might have told me more about them," said Hepzibah in a distressed voice. "Where can I get some goloshes?" she asked of Cuthbert Cockerel, who had settled down comfortably for

the afternoon on the back of the hauling cart.

"Don't know!" said Cuthbert Cockerel, almost crossly, for he never *was* at his best on a wet day.

"I *should* like to know," said Hepzibah to herself. Then, as she saw Kathleen Cow crossing the Farmyard, she called out to her and explained what she wanted.

"You see it's really most important that I should go to this Sowing Party," she went on. "We're sowing barley seed under the Old Elm Tree to-day—that is, if Gertie Grunter hasn't eaten all the grain—and I *should* like to go." And she looked sadly at the great ditch of water outside the Cart Lodge, and the muddy Farmyard beyond.

"Most unfortunate!" remarked Kathleen Cow, but she shook her head sadly over the suggestion of goloshes. "Must be something new," she said. "I've never heard of them." And *she* went on by herself in the direction of the Old Elm Tree.

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Taraxacum Turkey was asleep in one corner of the Cart Lodge, but Hepzibah did not dare wake him up to ask him. She called out to Gertie Grunter, who splashed past, covered from head to foot in brown mud, but Gertie only shouted out, "Too late to stop," and hurried on to the Sowing Party.

The next people to pass were Alphonso Ass and Dorcas Donkey.

"Do you know what goloshes are?" asked Hepzibah anxiously, after explaining all about the Sowing Party.

"Yes—at least—that is, I'm not quite sure," said Alphonso Ass.

"Not off-hand, you know," added Dorcas Donkey, scratching one ear thoughtfully.

"Things to keep your feet dry, you say?" asked Alphonso Ass. "Why, yes, of course." And he winked knowingly at Dorcas Donkey.

"Yes, yes, of course!" said Dorcas Donkey.

"And can you get me some?" asked Hepzibah, ruffling out all her feathers in her excitement.

Then Dorcas Donkey and Alphonso Ass nodded their heads mysteriously and went off behind the Cart Lodge. They returned before very long, each one pushing before him a long wooden plank. These they kicked into place; one leading out from the Cart Lodge, over the ditch of water, and the other joining on at the end and crossing a bad muddy patch of the Farmyard, so that Hepzibah could walk right across them to the comparatively dry ground beyond.

"There are your goloshes," said Alphonso Ass.

"Yes," said Dorcas Donkey, nodding her head. "They'll keep your feet beautifully dry."

Hepzibah Hen *was* pleased. She thanked them both a great many times over, and then hurried off along the planks to her Sowing Party.

"Can't tell you how grateful I am," she fluttered.

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"I'll tell everybody what lovely goloshes you've given me."

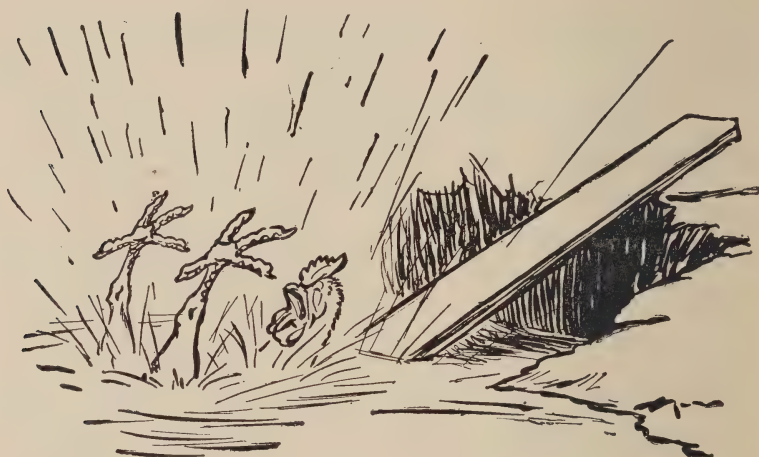
"I wonder what those things really are?" said Alphonso Ass, as soon as she was out of hearing.

"Doesn't matter," answered Dorcas Donkey. "These did just as well—and look how pleased she was!"

Meanwhile the Sowing Party were very busy talking and telling each other everything that was happening in the Farmyard.

At the end of the afternoon they all felt that they had done a great deal of work, and, leaving the Old Elm Tree, they started off home.

"Look at my goloshes!" cried Hepzibah as they came in sight of the Cart Lodge. "Wasn't it kind of Dorcas Donkey and Alphonso Ass to find them for me?" Then she started off along the planks. She was just passing over the deepest part of the ditch when Gertie Grunter, who was



hurrying home after the Sowing Party, happened to catch her foot in the plank. Up it turned—Hepzibah slipped and slithered on the slanting surface for a moment—then—Splash!—Down she went into the ditch, great splashes of water flying in all directions.

Then there was a tremendous to-do. All the Farmyard Folk hurried to the spot to see what had happened, and poor Hepzibah fluttered about

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in the deep water, making the most terrible gurgling and gasping sounds.

"Somebody help me!" she cried. "I'm drowning—Oh, dear! Oh, dear!"

"What's all this?" cried Shirley Sheepdog, pushing his way through the crowd. "What is Hepzibah doing?" And he walked bravely into the middle of the ditch, picked her up and carried her safely into the Cart Lodge.

"Oh, thank you! Thank you!" gasped Hepzibah, as soon as she had enough breath to speak. "One of my goloshes—you know."

"Your *what?*" barked Shirley, so Chirabel Chicken had to explain it all over again.

"Goloshes!" yapped Shirley, who always knew more about the ways of men and women than any other of the Farmyard Folk,



"those planks goloshes!" And he positively rolled about the Cart Lodge with laughter. "You wait!"



he cried, and bounded away through the Farmyard. The next moment he was back again, and in his mouth he carried a black rubber shoe.

"There you are!" he chortled, laying it down beside the bedraggled and not very happy Hepzibah. "Next time it rains, you go for a sail in that!" And off he went, laughing and laughing and laughing.

Then Hepzibah heard a horrid sound. Gertie Grunter, who had never really said she was sorry for tripping over the plank, turned away and started to laugh too—

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“Ha — ha — ha!” she laughed, turning away toward Sty House, and, as she disappeared round the corner, Hepzibah heard the squelchy sound of her feet in the mud growing fainter and fainter.

“HA — ha — ha” — SQUELCH — squelch — squelch . . .



CHAPTER XI

In Which There is a Frost in the Farmyard

"SHIVERING weather, this!" muttered Hepzibah Hen to herself, as she hurried about stuffing up the cracks in the walls of her corner of the Cart Lodge with bits of hay. "It never *has* been really cozy in here since the day when Kathleen Cow came to tea and ate one of my walls away by mistake. Shivering weather! I wonder what Chirabel Chicken is doing out in the cold all this time. She's sure to catch a chill."

"Don't expect so," said Cuthbert Cockerel, in an uninterested voice. He was very busy keeping himself warm, and hadn't time to think of other things.

All of a sudden there was a great flutter and noise outside in the Farmyard, and in burst

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Chirabel Chicken, all out of breath from running.

"Such a funny thing!" she gasped. "What do you think has happened!—the Pond has disappeared—and in its place is something most 'strordinary—and Dulcima Duck has nowhere to swim—and Gertie Grunter's thirsty—and—and—"

"Don't be a silly chicken!" said Cuthbert Cockerel. "The Pond can't have disappeared." And he went back to the business of keeping himself warm once more.

That was all very well, but Chirabel certainly did seem very excited, and *something* must have happened. Hepzibah felt she would like to go and find out for herself, so out she went with Chirabel Chicken.

As they came in sight of the Pond, they saw quite a crowd of people—all the Farmyard Folk had come to see what was happening.

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“What am I going to do?” called out Dulcima Duck. “My Pond’s gone away and I’ve got nowhere to swim!”

It certainly *did* look very odd—like a large piece of misty glass, with funny little knobs on it here and there—and not a drop of water to be seen. Hepzibah had an uncomfortable feeling that she’d seen something like it before, but she couldn’t remember just what, so she said nothing, but nodded in a friendly way to Kathleen Cow, who had just joined the group.

“Good-morning,” said Kathleen Cow politely. “Most unusual to have a frost as early as this, isn’t it?”

“What’s frost?” asked Dulcima Duck.

“Oh, freezing—and ice—and coldness. Most inconvenient, I call it. No water to drink.”

“That what’s happened to my Pond?” asked Dulcima Duck indignantly.

“Shocking, isn’t it?” said Hepzibah hurriedly.

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"None of these young people can remember last year, of course. So glad you were able to explain it so well to them."

"But how am I going to get into my Pond?" asked Dulcima Duck, walking up and down by the edge of the ice in a most unhappy way.

"Must break the ice," said Kathleen Cow; and very carefully she kicked a large stone down onto the Pond.

It was no good, the stone slid easily over the ice, without so much as crack-



ing it. So then Kathleen Cow kicked another and another. Suddenly there was a cry from Gertie Grunter.

"My carrot!" she gasped. "My biggest carrot! I brought it with me only for company, and

in case I might get back a little late, and now you've kicked it onto the Pond!"

It was true—the last stone Kathleen Cow had kicked had taken with it Gertie Grunter's large



red carrot, which lay alone in the very middle of the Pond. The next moment, before any one could stop her, Gertie Grunter had stepped down onto the ice, and was hur-

rying after it. Her feet slipped first in one direction and then in another, and then they all slipped in different directions at once, and Gertie Grunter fell down with a squeal of terror. The harder she tried to get up again, the more she

A Frost in the Farmyard 103

slipped, till at last she had to give it up and just lie there.

"I'll freeze! I'll freeze! Help—help—help!"

The Farmyard Folk looked at each other in a hopeful kind of way.

"Surely there's something we can do," said Hepzibah. "I expect poor Gertie Grunter's feeling cold."

"Might pull her off," suggested Kathleen Cow in a doubtful voice, and Dulcima Duck hurried off to get a piece of rope.

Throwing it to her was the difficulty, but they managed it at last.

"Wait till we've all got a firm hold of it," called Dulcima, but Gertie Grunter was, by this time, in such a state of panic that she simply didn't listen. She seized the rope and pulled with all her might and main, before any one except Dulcima had even started to grasp the other end. The next moment Dulcima Duck was slithering over the

ice on the end of the rope—then she too lost her balance and fell in a heap beside the terror-stricken Gertie Grunter, who was now kicking out wildly with all her legs.

“Help—help!” squealed Gertie Grunter. “My back’s getting all wet!”

“Most unfortunate!” said Kathleen Cow, from the bank. “It must be thawing!”

The next moment there was a creaking, crackling sound, the ice gave way, and, with a final squeal of terror from Gertie, she and Dulcima Duck found themselves in icy cold water.





Slithering over the ice on the end of the rope

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Dulcima was the first to recover, and she half swam and half paddled to join the commotion on the bank. Fortunately the Pond was not deep, so there was no real danger of Gertie Grunter's drowning, but she squealed so loudly and kicked so hard that it was very difficult to get near her at all.

"Most unfortunate affair," said Kathleen Cow, when at last they had got her safely onto the bank.

"Be sure to go straight home and have something hot," said Hepzibah, and they all went with her to the door of Sty House.

"Poor Gertie Grunter!" said Hepzibah to Chirabel Chicken on the way home. "But anyway she did say she was thirsty, and she must certainly have had a very good drink!"

CHAPTER XII

In Which Several of the Farmyard Folk are Frightened by a Haunted Haystack



HEPZIBAH HEN was disturbed. More—she was thoroughly upset. She came running down the Rickyard with all her feathers ruffled, looking just

as distressed and flustered as it is possible for a hen to look.

“Such a strange thing!” she gasped. “Chirabel Chicken said she saw it move, and I thought it must be her imagination, so I went to look myself—and *sounds* came out of the haystack—Oh,

dear! Oh, dear!" And she sank exhausted on a bundle of straw near by.

"Don't believe there was anything!" said Cuthbert Cockerel, testily, but Chirabel Chicken said nothing. She opened her eyes only a little wider, and stretched her neck out a little farther than usual. She did not look a happy chicken.

"What's it all about?" asked Dulcima Duck, who had come hurrying up from the Pond when she heard the noise.

"Don't know," said Cuthbert Cockerel. "Just fuss!" And he strutted away as though such things were beneath his dignity. But he went only a little way, so that he could hear what they were talking about.

Hepzibah was altogether too flurried to tell the story properly, but gradually it all came out—how Chirabel Chicken had been coming down the Rickyard rather late one afternoon and had seen a dark shadow moving behind one of the haystacks.

She had hurried to see what it was, but, on reaching the other side of the haystack had found nothing there at all.

"And there was no one anywhere in sight!" went on Chirabel in a frightened voice. "And



then, just as I was turning away, one end of the haystack *moved*—it stuck right out, and nearly bumped into me—just as if it were alive!" And Chirabel's voice tailed off into a high-pitched squeak in her excitement.

"Most alarming!" agreed Kathleen Cow, who had joined the group. In fact by this time almost all the Farmyard Folk had collected to hear what had frightened Chirabel.

"Upsetting, I call it," said Hepzibah. "And so near Christmas, too! We shall none of us dare to go near the Rickyard after dark now."

"Frightened?" asked Gertie Grunter. "Frightened of a bundle of hay!" And she chuckled to herself in a not very friendly way.

"What's that?" said Dulcima Duck. "Who's frightened?"

"Such an idea!" said Hepzibah indignantly. "Frightened indeed! Who said frightened?"

"Just a little startled, perhaps," said Chirabel Chicken.

But Gertie Grunter only went on laughing, and suggested that Hepzibah should go up the Rickyard for a walk that evening.

"Most certainly," said Kathleen Cow, after a slight pause. "We'll all go together."

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And so it was arranged, and that same evening all the Farmyard Folk met together outside the Cart Lodge, and prepared to go for a stroll up the Rickyard.

"Now, are we all here?" asked Cuthbert Cockrel, who agreed with Gertie Grunter that it was quite time to put an end to this nonsense.

"Where's Taraxacum Turkey?" asked Chirabel, but no one answered her. There was a silence and everybody looked at everybody else in an uncomfortable sort of way. Chirabel Chicken was too young to know that it was not wise to ask after Taraxacum Turkey at Christmas time.

"Moon's getting up," said Kathleen Cow. "Time we were starting."

Chirabel shivered just a little bit, it was so dark. But she didn't really mind. There were so many people about, and it's easier to feel brave when there are other people there.



“Come along,” said Gertie Grunter. “Show us the way, Hepzibah and Chirabel.”

“Show you the way—oh, it’s quite easy,” said Hepzibah hurriedly. “Just straight up the Rick-yard, and it’s the top stack on the right.”

“She can go first, as she’s so brave,” said Chirabel, looking nervously at Gertie Grunter. But Gertie didn’t seem to think that at all a good idea.

It was one thing to go up the Rickyard in the daytime, but quite another to lead the whole party on a moonlight night.

"Don't waste time," said Cuthbert Cockerel. "Kathleen Cow can lead the way, as she's so big."

Kathleen didn't seem to mind, so she started off. Dorcas Donkey and Alphonso Ass followed close behind her, and then came all the rest of the Farmyard Folk in a body.

"Getting very near!" said Gertie Grunter, looking sideways at Hepzibah. "Can't see any mysterious shadows!"

But Chirabel could — things seemed to be moving behind every haystack, and the moon was so bright and all the shadows so very black indeed.

But Gertie Grunter was getting more and more amused every moment. "Ghosts!" she said. "Haunted Haystacks! Ha! ha! ha!"

But she stopped very suddenly, turned quite



The Haunted Haystack

pale in the moonlight, and gave a frightened squeal.

From the haystack next to her (which was the top one on the right-hand side) came a subdued but quite distinct noise, and a great wisp of hay jumped out and hit her on the face. She waited for nothing more. Uttering squeal upon squeal of terror, she turned and ran as fast as she could, right down the Rickyard and across the Farmyard. In fact, she never stopped until she was safely lying in the very farthest corner of Sty House.

As a matter of fact nobody waited for any more. Those who had been near Gertie Grunter had seen just what had happened, and those who were farther off knew that *something* had, and, running, tumbling, and falling over each other, all the Farmyard Folk hurried out of the Rickyard. Even Kathleen Cow, though she did not exactly run, went quite quickly away.

“S-s-s-s-shocking!” said Hepzibah. “S-s-s-

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shocking, isn't it? You've seen for yourselves now!" But Chirabel said nothing at all. She was so very frightened.

For the next three days nobody dared go near the Rickyard after dark—and even in the day-



time everybody avoided it as much as possible. It made things very difficult, and the party on Christmas evening was a very quiet affair, held at the far end of the Farmyard.

The next morning Kathleen Cow had to go through the Rickyard on the way to her favorite meadow. She looked suspiciously at the top haystack on the right—it seemed to move—and then, before she had time to go quickly past, a long neck was thrust out, with a thin and haggard face at the end of it, and a husky voice said:

“Is Christmas over yet?”

It was Taraxacum Turkey!

“Most alarming at first!” said Kathleen Cow, later on, when explaining what had happened. “I assured him it was all right, and that Christmas was safely over—and out he came. He had burrowed his way in and had been there nearly a fortnight. He was getting food when Chirabel saw him.”

“Yes,” said Taraxacum. “And I never dared come out again, and I became very hungry. I’m so glad it’s all over now. Christmas is such a

nervous time of year if one happens to be a Turkey. I tried to tell Gertie Grunter, and ask her to bring me some food, but the silly Pig ran away."

Hepzibah Hen didn't laugh — she only smiled.

CHAPTER XIII

In Which Chirabel Chicken Learns the Use of Her Wings

“CAW! Caw! Caw!”—There was no mistaking *that* voice, and Chirabel Chicken chirped a polite good-morning as Cordelia Crow came to roost on the shaft of an old hauling-cart near by.

“Corn, is it, you’re looking for?” asked Cordelia.

Chirabel nodded her head and

went on scratching about on the edge of the path in her hunt for any odd bits of grain that might happen to have fallen there.

Now Cordelia Crow was looked upon as rather



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an idle bird by the Farmyard Folk. She always looked so particularly black and shiny and never had a feather out of place. Then she seemed to put on quite a condescending air whenever she spoke to any of them—in fact, they did not like her very much.

“Can’t you find any?” she asked, after a moment or two’s silence. “Can’t think why you want to waste your time like that!”

“Sure to be some soon,” said Chirabel. “It’s such fun hunting about for it!”

“Call that fun!” said Cordelia. “Call that fun, indeed! A chicken like you doesn’t know what fun is!”

Chirabel looked surprised, but said nothing.

“Talking of fun,” went on Cordelia Crow, “you should see what fun we have on the tops of the trees. Come with me and I’ll show you what fun is. Oh, I forgot you can’t fly,” she added in a patronizing manner.

"I *can* fly!" said Chirabel indignantly, and fluttered nearly six inches into the air to show how clever she was.

"Haw! haw! haw!" laughed Cordelia. "Call that flying! Why, if that's the best you can do, what have you got wings for, I should like to know." And she flew away over the tree-tops, laughing as she went in a not altogether friendly way.

"I've never thought of that," said Chirabel to herself. "I wonder what I *have* got wings for." And the idea worried her so much that she went home to ask Hepzibah Hen about it.

"Such a question to ask!" said Hepzibah, who was busy turning out the Cart Lodge. "All chickens have wings—and hens too. Very sensible things to have, I'm sure."

But this didn't satisfy Chirabel, so she went on down to the Pond to ask Dulcima Duck.

"Very useful when swimming. I'm sure one

would overbalance without them. You watch me!"

"But I can't swim," said Chirabel Chicken, "so that can't be what *my* wings are for!" And she went on to ask somebody else.

The next person she met was Gertie Grunter, and she wanted to know so badly that she even stopped and asked her if *she* knew.

"Wings?" asked Gertie Grunter. "I'm sure I don't know. I always wondered why you feathered folk had wings. Except, of course—well, ask the Farmer and he'll tell you the answer is bread sauce!!" And Gertie Grunter laughed to herself in a horrid, pointed kind of way.

Chirabel didn't know a bit what she meant, but felt that it probably wasn't altogether a nice meaning, so she went on to ask Cuthbert Cockerel.

"Don't you know what your wings are for?" asked Cuthbert Cockerel. "Why, to make you look beautiful, of course. Just compare a wingless creature like Alphonso Ass with—er—me,

for example. *Then* there's no need to ask what wings are for." And he strutted up and down in front of Chirabel so that she could be sure to see what a very fine bird he was.

That was all very well, but Chirabel couldn't help feeling that there was probably another reason, so she went on round the Farmyard asking every one she met. But Dorcas Donkey didn't know, and Alphonso Ass didn't know, and, when she asked Kathleen Cow, Kathleen only shook her head in a wondering kind of way and said:

"Most curious! Most curious! I never *did* know what they were for!"

So Chirabel went on until she came to a deep ditch where Gwendolin Goose was busy sorting out green weed.

"Silly Chicken!" said Gwendolin Goose, when Chirabel had explained what she wanted to know. "Silly Chicken! Wings are one's most useful means of protection!"

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Chirabel thought for a minute or two, then, "What's 'means of protection'?" she asked.

"Silly question!" said Gwendolin Goose, who wasn't altogether certain herself. "Wings are for chasing away people one doesn't like. Now, sup-



posing *I* don't like *you*—" And Gwendolin Goose stretched out her long neck and began to hiss, and, spreading her great wings as far as they would spread, she started flapping them up and down in a most alarming manner, and ran toward Chirabel Chicken.

Chirabel thought she had never seen anything quite so terrible before, and, turning round, she ran as hard as she could up the Farmyard, giving little "chirps" of terror as she went.

"What ever's the matter with the Chicken?" cried Hepzibah Hen, running out of the Cart Lodge to see what all the noise was about.

But Chirabel could only gasp out, "Means of



protection! Means of protection!" over and over again, which so annoyed Hepzibah that she sent her to roost for the rest of the day.

But Chirabel didn't mind a bit. She just thought, and thought, and thought.

"If *that's* what my wings are for," thought Chirabel Chicken to herself, "well—I don't like Cordelia Crow."

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It was several days later when Cordelia Crow again visited the Farmyard. She was strutting along between the haystacks, thinking what a much more handsome and altogether better kind of person a Crow was than any of the Farmyard Folk, when all of a sudden a most curious thing happened. Suddenly, from behind one of the haystacks, there appeared a whirling ball of feathers, coming toward her at a tremendous pace, and making the most peculiar noise, that was something between a hiss and a chirp.

Cordelia was so surprised that she just stood and looked at it, and the ball of feathers was moving so fast that it was unable to stop itself. The next moment it was upon her, flapping wildly in the air as it came, and, before she knew what had happened, they were rolling over and over together in the dust.

"Careful! Careful!" cried Cordelia Crow, really frightened at last, and then she swallowed a whole



beakful of dust. Shaking herself free, she rose into the air, spluttering as she went, and then flew off as fast as she could go to warn the other Crows of the mad bird in the Farmyard.

Then Chirabel Chicken picked herself up, smoothed out her feathers, and smiled a triumphant smile all to herself.

“Means of protection!” she murmured softly. “Means of protection! That’s what wings are for!” And she started hunting about for corn by the side of the path without any fear of interruption from troublesome crows.

CHAPTER XIV

In Which Bellarion Bull Comes to the Farmyard

"SURELY he can't be a very nice sort of person to do a thing like that!" said Hepzibah Hen, fluffing out her feathers in a most concerned sort of way.

"Don't expect he knows any better," said Cuthbert Cockerel, who pretended not to be very interested in the discussion. "Who is he, anyway?"



But nobody seemed to know what the new arrival's name was. He had come back with the

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Farmer from Market, late the night before, and had been put straight into a meadow near by.

"Quite a big person I should say," said Dulcima Duck. "He passed close by where I was sleeping, and seemed to shake the whole ground!"

All the Farmyard Folk had collected together in a wonderfully short space of time to hear just what *had* happened. Shirley Sheepdog had told Connie Colt, who had passed on the news to Gwendolin Goose; and now there wasn't a soul in the Farmyard who did not know that the new arrival had chased the Farmer's youngest son right across the meadow, and that the Small



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Boy had fallen down and cut both his knees badly.

"Most ungentlemanly, I call it!" said Kathleen Cow.

"Sure none of *us* would do a thing like that," said Hepzibah.

"Good thing to do, *I* think," interrupted Gertie Grunter. "I don't like the Small Boy. He picks up all the acorns early in the mornings before the door of Sty House is undone. Then all that's left for me are a few that are hidden in the grass — and they're generally trodden on!"

"Good thing, indeed!" said Hepzibah indignantly. "Shocking ideas you do have, to be sure! Such a — a — piggish thing to say, too!" And she positively ruffled up with annoyance.

All the other Farmyard Folk agreed with Hepzibah, but they couldn't help laughing when they saw how angry Gertie Grunter looked. Nothing annoyed her more than being called "piggish."

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She *did not like* it, and she went straight back to Sty House and sat with her back to the Farmyard, trying to look as if she were very busy doing something else.

And all the time she was thinking — thinking hard. She was very angry with Hepzibah — very angry indeed — and she was trying to think how she could get her revenge. At last she had an idea. She got up, strolled out of Sty House, and walked in a leisurely manner up the Rickyard. As soon as she got round the corner she ran as fast as she could go toward the Large Meadow, where the new arrival lived. Yes, there he was — a large red Bull with little tight curls all over his forehead.

He looked so very big and strong that Gertie thought it would be best not to go inside the field, so she wished him good-day through the bars of the gate.

“Good-morning,” said the Bull, nodding his

head in quite a friendly manner. "Who are you? My name is Bellarion Bull."

Gertie Grunter explained who she was, and then started telling him all about the other people in the Farmyard in a conversational manner.

"You know," she went on, "we have been wanting a strong person like you for some time. There are some people in the Farmyard — particularly Feathered Folk — who think themselves Very Important, and who badly want teaching a lesson. And you look so brave and —"

"Quite right!" said Bellarion Bull. "I'm sorry to hear you're being downtrodden. Are they a great deal bigger than you?"

"Well — not so much *bigger*," said Gertie Grunter, "as — as — well — *oppressive*."

She wasn't quite sure what "oppressive" really meant, but Bellarion seemed to understand, for he nodded his head and promised his help.

"Hepzibah Hen is the worst," went on Gertie

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hurriedly. "I thought if I could persuade her to come and see you here, then you might chase her round the field a bit, and that would show her that you were a person to be respected."

"Well, I don't know that that would be quite polite," began Bellarion.

"Only in fun, of course," interrupted Gertie Grunter hurriedly. "Just as a game, you know. You'll easily recognize Hepzibah. Quite a common sort of fowl. But, anyway, I'll grunt twice when she speaks to you so that you shall know."

So it was arranged, and Gertie Grunter hurried back to the Farmyard. It was quite an easy matter to tell everybody about Bellarion Bull, and how lonely he was in the Meadow by himself. She told them all, quite truthfully, that Bellarion Bull had never meant any harm when he chased the Small Boy. He only wanted a game, and it was the Small Boy who had misunderstood him. Then she again said how lonely Bellarion was,

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and how very much he would appreciate it if some of them went to call upon him.

"Of course," said Hepzibah. "We'll all go and see him at once. Come along, Chirabel."

"Most certainly," agreed Kathleen Cow, and off they all moved toward the Large Meadow.

One by one all the Farmyard Folk went into the Large Meadow to say "How-do-you-do" to Bellarion Bull. Kathleen Cow went first, then Cuthbert Cockerel, and next, Hepzibah Hen.

No sooner had Hepzibah slipped in through the hole in the hedge than Gertie Grunter, who had been standing near by, gave two loud grunts, as arranged. But Bellarion made no move, and instead seemed to be looking at Gertie Grunter in a curious kind of way. Nearer and nearer came Hepzibah, all fuss and feathers and "welcome," but still Bellarion made no move.

Gertie Grunter could not understand it at all. She grunted twice more, loudly and obviously,

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but even then Bellarion made no move—he only gazed in a fascinated way at Gertie Grunter herself; at least, just over her head—it really was most odd—and frightening too. Gertie felt most uncomfortable. Supposing Bellarion Bull was really a savage sort of person. Supposing it had *not* been in fun that he had chased the Small Boy. Supposing—but there was no time to suppose any more. With a sudden bellow of impatience Bellarion put down his head and charged—not at Hepzibah Hen, but at Gertie Grunter herself.



With a squeal of terror Gertie turned and ran.

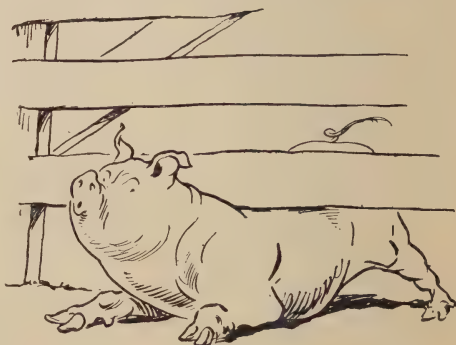


Right across the field she went, her little feet slipping from side to side in the mud. On and on, her squeals getting louder and louder, until at last she

squeezed her way under the gate, one second before Bellarion Bull came pounding up to it.

"Great brute!" sobbed Gertie as soon as she had enough breath to speak. "Great brute of a Bull!"

Bellarion looked quite hurt.



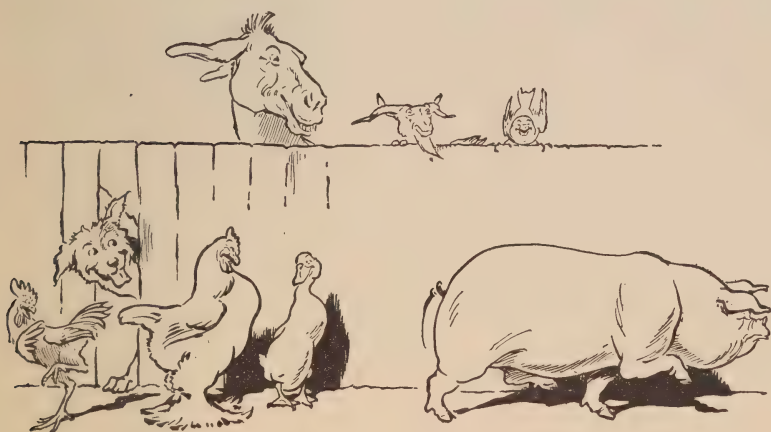
"It's your tail!" he said apologetically. "It

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fascinated me—I only wanted to see if it would come uncurled. Mayn't I just undo it with the tip of one horn?"

But Gertie Grunter was so angry she just got up and walked slowly back to Sty House in what she believed was a dignified way, and tried not to listen to the amused titter which came from all the Farmyard Folk who had been watching.

So Bellarion Bull went back to the business of



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saying "How-do-you-do" to every one: and, being a friendly person by nature, he was soon on the best of terms with everybody in the Farmyard.

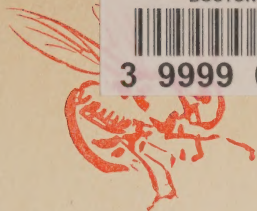




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